MAKING ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Planning · Preparation · Performance

University of Guyana — Department of Language & Cultural Studies

75%

of people fear public speaking
(Glossophobia — Bovee & Thill, 2023)

References: Bovee & Thill (2023) Business Communication Today, 15e | Markel & Selber (2022) Technical Communication, 13e

THEY SAY PEOPLE FEAR PUBLIC SPEAKING MORE THAN THEY FEAR DEATH.
www.dilbert.com scottadams@aol.com
SO TECHNICALLY, IF YOU KILL A GUY WHO'S SCHEDULED TO SPEAK, YOU'RE DOING HIM A FAVOR.
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WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO SLEEP?
NEVER.

Learning Objectives

Identify Reasons

Explain why oral presentations matter in professional, academic, and civic life.

Select Proposal Format

Choose the most effective format for presenting proposals in professional contexts.

Plan & Organize

Apply the guidelines for analyzing your audience, budgeting time, and structuring content.

Rehearse & Transition

Practice delivery strategies and smooth transitions when co-presenting with a team.

Enhance with Visuals

Select and design appropriate graphics that complement — not overpower — your message.

Proofread & Edit

Apply editing and proofreading strategies to slide decks before presenting.

Bovee & Thill (2023) | Markel & Selber (2022)

Opening Poll — How Are You Feeling?

🎙️ INTERACTIVE

Respond to the poll/Google Form indicating how you feel about public speaking/oral presentations.

75%	#1	100%
of people fear public speaking	most common fear worldwide	of professionals must present

- 😰 **Terrified — please help!**
- 😬 **Nervous but willing**
- 😐 **Okay, it depends on the audience**
- 😎 **Confident — let's go!**

Bovee & Thill (2023) | Markel & Selber (2022)

Reasons for Giving Oral Presentations

Bovee & Thill (2023), Ch.14 | Markel & Selber (2022), Ch.21

💼 Career Advancement

Job interviews, promotions, and performance reviews often hinge on your ability to communicate ideas clearly (Bovee & Thill, 2023).

🤝 Winning & Keeping Clients

Sales pitches and client updates require confident, persuasive oral delivery.

🏛️ Community and Work Engagements

Conferences, town halls, and committee meetings rely on effective oral communication.

📡 Hybrid & Digital Contexts

Webinars, video pitches, and asynchronous recorded presentations are now standard professional formats.

🌐 Cross-Cultural Communication

Awareness of cultural norms around directness, formality, and visual style is essential (Markel & Selber, 2022).

🧠 Leadership

Oral presentations establish your expertise, credibility, and professional brand.

Bovee & Thill (2023) | Markel & Selber (2022)

1. How is public speaking different from regular conversation?
2. How are they the same?

The Message Crafting Process

Markel & Selber (2022), Ch.21 | Bovee & Thill (2023), Ch.14

01
PLANNING

Analyze audience, purpose, setting & time constraints

02
DRAFTING

Outline key points; use intro–body–conclusion structure

03
REVISING

Ensure logical flow, transitions, and persuasive evidence

04
EDITING

Tighten language; eliminate jargon and redundancy

05
PROOFREADING

Check slide text, speaker notes, and visual labels

"Tell them what you will tell them, then tell them, then tell them what you told them." — The Preacher's Maxim

Activity: Explore the 5 Stages

🎙️ INTERACTIVE

Tap through each stage — what does it mean for YOUR next presentation?

🎙️ **'Which stage do you usually skip? What happens when you do?'**

1. Planning

Invest 40% of prep time here. Who is the audience? What is the purpose? What are the constraints?

2. Drafting

Outline only — not a full script. Follow the preview–present–review structure. (Bovee & Thill, 2023)

3. Revising

Ask 'so what?' after each slide. If you can't answer, revise until you can.

4. Editing

Apply the 6×6 rule: max 6 lines per slide, 6 words per line. Cut every word that adds no meaning.

5. Proofreading

Spell-check + read aloud + peer review. Check chart labels, speaker notes, and data sources.

Markel & Selber (2022) | Bovee & Thill (2023)

1. Analyzing the Speaking Situation

Markel & Selber (2022), Ch.21

AUDIENCE

- Who are they? What do they know?
- What values motivate them?
- Security · Recognition · Growth · Connectedness
- In-person vs. virtual audience dynamics

PURPOSE

- Inform, persuade, or recommend?
- Formal proposal or routine update?
- Align purpose with audience goals
- Digital or hybrid format considerations

TIME

- Intro: ~10% | Body: ~80% | Close: ~10%
- Budget Q&A time separately
- Async recordings: chunk into shorter segments
- Practise to exact time limits

SETTING

- Room size, lighting, acoustics
- Technology: slides, mic, screen-share
- Hybrid: in-person + remote attendees
- Test all tech beforehand

Markel & Selber (2022) | Bovee & Thill (2023)

Scenario: Audience Analysis in Action

🎙️ INTERACTIVE

🎙️ **Read the scenario and decide which strategy is best.**

Scenario: You are presenting a proposal to introduce a student mentorship programme to your university's senior management team. They are busy, results-focused administrators who control the budget but know little about student welfare research.

Question: Which opening strategy best matches this audience?

A) "Universities with mentorship programmes report a 20% improvement in first-year retention — here is how we can achieve the same."

B) "Let me tell you about Amara, a first-year student who was struggling until she found a mentor…"

C) "Hey everyone, today I just want to chat about how we can help students feel less alone on campus."

Bovee & Thill (2023) — audience values: security, recognition, growth, connectedness

2. Organizing the Presentation

Markel & Selber (2022) | Bovee & Thill (2023), Ch.14

INTRODUCTION

1. Greet and introduce yourself
2. State the presentation title and purpose
3. Preview the main points (signpost)
4. Establish credibility with context
5. Time: approx. 10% of total

BODY

1. Cause and effect
2. Problem–solution
3. Comparison–contrast
4. Chronological or spatial order
5. Limit to 3 main points for retention /Limit to fixed parts
6. Time: approx. 80% of total

CONCLUSION

1. Signal the end verbally ('In closing…')
2. Summarise the key points
3. State implications or call to action
4. Thank audience and invite questions
5. Time: approx. 10% of total

Bovee & Thill (2023) | Markel & Selber (2022)

Decision Tool: Which Presentation Format?

🎙️ INTERACTIVE

Use this decision tree to guide your format choice

🎙️ Facilitator: Walk through the questions aloud. Ask students to respond and compare their answers.

Q1 — Where is your audience?

- Present in the room
- Remote / online
- Async (watch later)

Q2 — How high are the stakes?

- High (board/client)
- Medium (peer/class)
- Low (team update)

Sample recommendations:

In-room + High stakes	Remote + High stakes	Async audience
Hybrid (Oral + Written)	**Live Video + Written Summary**	**Recorded Video (< 10 min)**

Bovee & Thill (2023), Ch.14 | Markel & Selber (2022), Ch.16

3. Crafting a Persuasive Argument

Markel & Selber (2022), Ch.8 | Bovee & Thill (2023), Ch.9

📊 EVIDENCE

Facts, statistics, expert testimony, case studies, and visual data that support your claim.

Ex: Employee turnover data, industry benchmarks, survey results.

→

🧠 REASONING

The logical connection between evidence and claim. Show WHY the evidence supports your conclusion.

Ex: If similar universities saw 20% retention gains, and we face the same issue, we likely will too.

→

🎯 CLAIM

The specific conclusion or action you want the audience to accept or take.

Ex: 'We recommend implementing flextime to reduce turnover among employees with young children.'

Also address opposing views: acknowledge, refute with evidence, or seek reconciliation. (Markel & Selber, 2022, Ch.8)

Activity: Build a Persuasive Argument

INTERACTIVE

Assign each statement to the correct part of the argument structure

Scenario: You want to persuade your university to extend library hours to 10pm on weeknights.

Statement 1: "A survey of 400 students found that 68% study best between 6–10pm, but the library closes at 6pm."

Statement 2: "If students' peak study hours are in the evening and the library is closed, extending hours will directly improve study access and academic outcomes."

Statement 3: "The university should extend library hours to 10pm on weeknights."

Markel & Selber (2022), Ch.8 — Evidence → Reasoning → Claim

4. Enhancing Presentations with Visuals

Markel & Selber (2022), Ch.21 | Bovee & Thill (2023), Ch.14

🎯 Match Visuals to Content

Bar charts for comparisons, line charts for trends, pie charts for proportions. Avoid decorative graphics that add no meaning.

🧹 Keep the Message Simple

Apply the 6×6 rule: no more than 6 lines per slide, 6 words per line. Each slide = one idea.

🎨 Use Colour Purposefully

Limit to 3–4 palette colours. Use high contrast for accessibility. Avoid red–green combinations.

🔄 Go Beyond Bullet Lists

Replace bullets with process diagrams, timelines, icons+text, or two-column layouts. Bullets reduce engagement.

⏱️ Leave Visuals Up Long Enough

Audiences need 20–30 seconds to process a chart. Pause — don't click past visuals prematurely.

🛠️ Plan for Technology Failure

Have a PDF backup on USB and in cloud storage. Know how to present without slides if needed.

Activity: Match the Visual to the Message

🎙️ INTERACTIVE

Which chart type best communicates this data in a proposal?

Scenario A: You want to show how your project budget is divided among four categories: staff, equipment, travel, and overheads.

✅ **Pie / Donut Chart or Table?**

Why: Shows parts of a whole as proportions — ideal for budget breakdowns.

Scenario B: You want to show how student enrolment has changed each year for the past 10 years.

✅ **Bar Graph or Line Chart**

Why: Best for tracking trends or change over time — the line shows direction and momentum.

Markel & Selber (2022), Ch.12 & 21 — Rule: choose the visual that makes your argument most quickly understood.

5. Selecting the Primary Format for Proposals

Bovee & Thill (2023), Ch.14 | Markel & Selber (2022), Ch.16

Format	Best Used When	Key Strengths	Limitations
Oral / Live Slideshow	Audience is present; persuasion critical; Q&A needed	Dynamic; builds rapport; immediate feedback	Fleeting — no permanent record unless recorded
Written Proposal	Complex technical detail; regulatory or legal submissions	Permanent record; readers set own pace	No vocal or visual emphasis; easily ignored
Hybrid (Oral + Written)	High-stakes decisions; executive or client audiences	Combines persuasion with documentation	Requires more preparation time
Recorded / Async Video	Remote or global stakeholders; asynchronous review	Scalable; replayable; accessible	Less interactive; Q&A delayed

6. Selecting Appropriate Visuals for Proposals

Markel & Selber (2022), Ch.12 & 21 | Bovee & Thill (2023), Ch.14

Visual Type	Best For	Proposal Context Example
Bar / Column Chart	Comparing quantities across categories	Comparing project budgets across departments
Line Chart	Showing trends over time	Projected ROI over 5 years
Pie / Donut Chart	Parts of a whole (use sparingly)	Market share breakdown
Table	Precise numerical data; multi-variable comparison	Cost–benefit analysis matrix
Process Diagram	Sequential steps or decision paths	Implementation timeline or approval workflow
Infographic / Icon Array	Simplifying complex statistics	Survey results; stakeholder demographics
Photo / Screenshot	Real-world context or evidence	Before-and-after images; product screenshots

Rule: Choose the visual that makes your argument most quickly understood — not the most complex one. (Markel & Selber, 2022)

7. Rehearsing & Transitioning Between Members

Bovee & Thill (2023), Ch.14 | Markel & Selber (2022), Ch.21

🎙️ Rehearsal Best Practices

- Practise the FULL presentation at least 3 times (Markel & Selber, 2022)
- Time each section — body, intro, Q&A — separately
- Practise IN the actual space or with the actual technology
- Record yourself and review for pace, filler words, and posture
- Practise with all visuals and slide transitions active
- Solo run-through AND full team run-through
- Simulate questions from a critical audience

🔁 Transitioning Between Team Members

- Assign clear roles: moderator, subject-matter presenter, visual controller (Bovee & Thill, 2023)
- Use verbal handoffs: 'I'll now pass to [Name], who will walk you through…'
- Transition slides should signal the speaker change visually
- All members face the audience — not each other — during transitions
- Agree on a signal for going over time (e.g., a discrete hand gesture)
- Practise handoffs until they feel natural, not scripted
- Q&A: agree in advance who answers which topic areas

Activity: Choose the Better Team Handoff

🎙️ INTERACTIVE

🎙️ Which Transition is smoother and why?

Scenario 1 — Priya has finished explaining the problem. It is Marcus's turn to present the solution.

A Priya: "So we have established that first-year retention is our core challenge. I'll now hand over to Marcus, who will walk us through our proposed solution and its projected outcomes."

B Priya: "Okay, I'm done. Marcus?"

Scenario 2 — Q&A: A budget question is asked while Marcus is speaking — but Priya is the budget expert.

A Marcus: "Great question — that is Priya's area. Priya, do you want to take that one?"

B Marcus: "I'll handle it — I think the budget is approximately… [guesses]."

Bovee & Thill (2023) — smooth handoffs: summarise, introduce, preview. Pre-assign Q&A topics.

8. Proofreading & Editing Presentations

Bovee & Thill (2023), Ch.5 & 14 | Markel & Selber (2022), Ch.10 & 21

✏️ Editing

✂️ Trim for Concision

Cut every word that does not add meaning. Slides should prompt you, not script you. (Bovee & Thill, 2023)

🔗 Improve Coherence

Check each slide follows logically. Add transition phrases in speaker notes. (Markel & Selber, 2022)

⚖️ Maintain Parallelism

Bullet lists must use the same grammatical form throughout. Mixed structures signal careless preparation.

📐 Align Formatting

Consistent font sizes, colours, and spacing across all slides signal professionalism. (Bovee & Thill, 2023)

🔎 Proofreading

🔍 Spell-Check Is Not Enough

Read aloud and read backwards — spell-checkers miss correctly-spelled wrong words.

👀 Peer Review

Have a colleague review for errors. Fresh eyes catch what you have become blind to. (Markel & Selber, 2022)

🖼️ Check Visual Labels

Verify all chart titles, axis labels, figure numbers, and data sources are accurate.

📖 Speaker Notes

Proofread speaker notes as carefully as slide text — they are part of the deliverable.

Activity: 60-Second Think

INTERACTIVE

What can go wrong — and how do you prepare for it?

Markel & Selber (2022) | Bovee & Thill (2023)

Activity: 60-Second Think

INTERACTIVE

What can go wrong — and how do you prepare for it?

Start timer when students begin writing

⚠️ **Technology fails**	Fix: Keep a PDF on USB + cloud storage. Test all tech before the session.
⚠️ **Forgetting your content**	Fix: Use an outline on cards — NOT a full script. Know your material, not your words.
⚠️ **Voice shakes / nerves**	Fix: Pause, breathe, slow down. Nervousness is invisible to the audience (Bovee & Thill, 2023).
⚠️ **Running over time**	Fix: Rehearse to exact time limits. Have a shortened version ready if needed.

Markel & Selber (2022) | Bovee & Thill (2023)

9. Delivery, Practice & Memorable Language

Bovee & Thill (2023), Ch.14 | Markel & Selber (2022), Ch.21

🎙️ DELIVERY TECHNIQUES

- Speak at a measured pace — pause for emphasis
- Vary tone and volume to signal importance
- Eliminate filler words (um, uh, like, you know)
- Use deliberate gesture to reinforce key points
- Make consistent eye contact with the full room
- Project enthusiasm — audiences mirror the speaker's energy (Bovee & Thill, 2023)

🗒️ NOTES VS. SCRIPT

- Use an outline on cards or speaker notes — NOT a full script
- Extemporaneous delivery sounds natural and engaged
- Slides are YOUR prompt, not the audience's reading material
- Know your material well enough to speak without looking at slides
- Three prompts per slide maximum (Markel & Selber, 2022)

💬 MEMORABLE LANGUAGE

- Open with a striking statistic, anecdote, or question
- Use concrete examples relevant to YOUR audience
- Incorporate rhetorical questions to drive engagement
- Use the rule of three for key points
- Close with a clear call to action or a resonant quote
- Involve the audience: polls, brief discussions, show of hands

"Prepare carefully; practise often; perform with enthusiasm." — Markel & Selber (2022)

Pre-Flight Checklist: Ready to Present?

🎙️ INTERACTIVE

🎙️ *Go through each item before presenting.*

- [ ] **📋 Content**
  Every slide has one clear idea and supports the main argument

- [ ] **🏗️ Structure**
  Intro previews, body develops 3 points, conclusion summarises and calls to action

- [ ] **🖼️ Visuals**
  All chart titles, axis labels, and data sources are accurate and readable

- [ ] **✏️ Language**
  Parallel bullet structure; no unexplained jargon; 6×6 rule applied

- [ ] **🔍 Proofreading**
  Spell-checked AND read aloud; speaker notes and visual labels verified

- [ ] **⏱️ Rehearsal**
  Timed the full presentation at least 3 times, including all visuals and tech

- [ ] **🛠️ Tech Backup**
  PDF saved on USB and cloud; tech tested in the actual space or platform

- [ ] **🤝 Team Roles**
  Verbal handoffs rehearsed; Q&A topics assigned; time signal agreed

Bovee & Thill (2023), Ch.5 & 14 | Markel & Selber (2022), Ch.10 & 21

Key Takeaways

1. Analyse your audience, purpose, setting, and time budget BEFORE you draft anything.
2. Structure every presentation with a clear introduction, a well-organised body (max 3 points), and a memorable conclusion.
3. Match visuals to content, keep them simple, use accessible colour, and practise WITH your graphics.
4. Select the right presentation format (oral, written, hybrid, or async video) based on audience, stakes, and context.
5. Team presentations require coordinated rehearsal, smooth verbal handoffs, and pre-assigned Q&A roles.
6. Edit for concision and coherence; proofread slides, labels, and speaker notes before you present.

Bovee & Thill (2023) Business Communication Today, 15e | Markel & Selber (2022) Technical Communication, 13e

Exit Poll: How Confident Are You Now?

INTERACTIVE

Compare with the opening poll — how far have you come?

- Still nervous — I need more practice
- A bit more confident than before
- Quite confident — I have a plan
- Very confident — I'm ready!

- Confidence builds with every practice run. Review the pre-flight checklist before your next presentation.
- Progress! Keep practising with the checklist and you'll keep improving.
- Excellent! Ensure you rehearse three full run-throughs before presenting.
- Outstanding! Share your strategies with peers — teaching reinforces learning.

Bovee & Thill (2023) | Markel & Selber (2022)

References

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"Be sincere; be brief; be seated." — Franklin D. Roosevelt

Thank You

Questions & Discussion